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A GREAT COLLECTION AND A GREAT CATALOGUE

WITH very few exceptions, and these mainly travelers of an unusual character of curiosity and catholicity of intelligence, we Americans know practically nothing of the great private art collections of Germany. This is not the fault of the amateurs of the empire, for as a matter of fact they are much more generous in opening their collections to persons truly interested in art than either the Paris or the London collectors. The whole trouble lies, I imagine, first in the subjection into which our collectors have surrendered themselves to the dealers in French art, and also to their ignorance of the German language. In Paris there is always a dealer or a dealer's clerk, who can speak English, ready to conduct a possible patron around among the private collections and show him why he ought to buy certain pictures, because this and that great collector owns an example of the same artist. It is legitimate business, and no one can object to it. The only pity is that the Germans do not take a leaf from the clever business book of their hereditary enemies.

The general opinion in this country in regard to German private collections is, that they are largely made up of sentimental subjects, painted according to the rules of the Academies of Düsseldorf, Munich, and the rest. As a matter of fact, some of the very finest collections of modern art of all schools are to be found in the hands of the great German collectors. It is a well-known fact to traveled critics that among the finest existing examples of the greatest epoch of modern French art, for instance, are those which hold places of honor on gallery walls in private mansions in Vienna, Berlin, Dresden, Stuttgart, Leipzig, and the powerful commercial cities of the north, which once constituted an empire among themselves. Like the English collectors, the Germans are faithful in encouraging their native art, but they see far beyond this purely social point in their collectorship. They are patriotic, but not insular. They appreciate and patronize German talent, but they do not shut out that of the rest of the world.

No better demonstration of this fact could be offered than the magnificent catalogue of the Behrens collection, which has been recently put out for private circulation only among the friends of the owner, and one of the few impressions of which I have just received. The owner of this collection, Mr. Eduard L. Behrens, is a banker of the city of Hamburg, and has long been known as a collector of true taste and intimate sympathy with what is worthy in art. He is one of those modern collectors to whom quantity means nothing and quality everything. His gallery is small in mere point of numbers, since it holds less than a hundred works, but whatever it does hold is the best procurable specimen of its kind. The collection is about evenly divided between German art in its highest modern inspiration and French art from the days of the romantic revolution to our own time.

On the German side we have Knaus, the two Achenbachs, Deffregger, Max, Meyerheim, Passini, Vautier, Sohn and Menzel, each in superb form. Fritz August von Kaulbach, Pettenkofen, Herbst, Ruth, Schreyer and the Gallicized Prussian Heilbuth, are other names which are worthily supported by the works to which they are attached. In works by that wonderful genius, Adolf Menzel, the Behrens collection is particularly strong. Ludwig Knaus also figures in striking force in some of his small fine works. Among the pictures by Andreas Achenbach are a couple worthy of Van Goyen and of Ruysdael, and there are two pictures, executed in an exuberantly jovial vein, of nymphs and satyrs, by Knaus, than which Rubens never did anything more spirited and certainly nothing so refined. A masterpiece by Baron Leys, "Burgomaster Six Visiting Rembrandt in His Studio," while not exactly German in inspiration, is one of those splendid revivifications of the past which only the serious and reflective Teutonic mind can produce. Without the attestation of the artist's name one might almost accept it as an original work by Rembrandt himself. One of the pictures by Max is really a revelation. It represents a little dead ape lying on a blanket in its cage in the menagerie. Nothing more pathetic or beautiful in sentiment could be imagined in its way than this curious and unusual study of a painter who generally inclines to far more artificial and exotic subjects. The Meyerheim is the famous menagerie picture for which the artist received a gold medal at the Paris Exposition and which did so much to establish his reputation.

The Frenchmen in the Behrens collection are led by the men of 1830 in great vigor. Here we have four Corots, one of them, an exceptionally fine figure. Daubigny is shown in five different canvases, each a gem; and there are three examples of Dupré, two of Diaz, two of Decamps, a fine Fromentin, Gerome's famous "Jews at the Wall of Solomon," a noble Troyon, a grand Rousseau, and one of the finest examples of Ziem possible to conceive of—the Riva degli Schiavoni at Venice during a thunder-storm. It is to be

noted in the specimens of Corot and several of his brethren that a most discriminating choice has been exercised, so that the artists may be examined in their different and most distinctive moods. Men of the later school who are also honorably represented are Alfred Stevens, Léon Lhermitte, Léon Bonnat, Roybet and Meissonier, and there are brilliant canvases by Boldini, Pradilla, Serra and others. The Meissonier is one of the best of his small standard-bearers, and the Roybet a remarkably powerful and characteristic figure of a cavalier of the seventeenth century. One of the examples of Alfred Stevens—a lady in a white summer gown preparing to refresh herself with a glass of lemonade—is a work of an order the artist no longer reaches. There are two specimens of Mauve, both eminently characteristic and fine, but, curiously enough, considering the evident tendency of Mr. Behrens' taste, nothing by Israels, Mesdag, or the other contemporaries of Mauve who still survive him.

I have, on several occasions, urged upon our amateurs, in this paper, the wisdom of having their collections catalogued in a competent and worthy manner, both as to text and illustrations. The reason for this should be obvious. It has been proved by the experience of collectors in Europe that the cataloguing of a collection is of the foremost importance in giving the collection a market value. Moreover, it establishes the record of pictures, which is nowadays, when the market is flooded with forgeries, a very essential matter. The famous catalogues of the Demidoff collection, at San Donato, and those of Laurent-Richard, Wilson, Febvre, Bischoffheim, Hartmann, Secretan, and others, in Paris, corroborate my statement. There is no shrewder or more far-seeing picture-dealer in the world than M. Durand-Ruel, who has his duplicate galleries in Paris and in this city. M. Durand-Ruel paid over 100,000 francs for the illustration of a catalogue of the pictures he had to sell. He did not expect to sell them through this medium, but he wished to give them an established place in the records of art, and every picture in his catalogue has a fixed authentication, no matter who may have purchased it. Perhaps, in making this catalogue, the shrewd old dealer builded better than he knew, for the six volumes of plates now command over \$100 in the market. I have been offered \$150 for the Behrens catalogue since it has come to me for review. What I would like to impress upon our collectors is, that when a man owns a fine collection of pictures, it is an honor to him to have it known. A catalogue made for private distribution brings pleasure to his friends. It gives a stated existence to his collection; and if, at any time, the collection should be broken up, he has a registration of it to guarantee its value. I have had a number of years of experience in art matters in this country. I have seen good pictures sacrificed and fine collections butchered. But I can, frankly, only blame their owners, first for the all-too-loose and indiscriminate way in which pictures have been collected here, and finally for their neglect to list their collections in a simple, sensible manner.

The catalogue, which has been made for Mr. Behrens by Franz Hanfstaengl, of Munich, is in splendid keeping with the collection itself. It is by all odds the most sumptuously tasteful work of its kind which has yet been got out. The reproduction of the picture is in photogravure, of remarkable *finesse* of execution and accuracy in the rendition of the color, values and feeling of the originals. There is not one of the plates which might not serve as a model. The series, indeed, must take precedence of any similar work which has recently appeared, and will prove a revelation to many persons who believe that the art of photogravure has reached its highest development in France. With work of this standard the great Munich house can challenge comparison with the world; and at a time when American collectors are commencing to have their collections catalogued in luxurious style, the advantages offered for the task by Franz Hanfstaengl merit special attention and investigation. A copy of the Behrens catalogue may be seen at the American branch of the Franz Hanfstaengl Fine Art Publishing House, formerly George Kirchner & Co., at 31 and 33 West Twenty-third street, New York City.

It would be an injustice to dismiss the subject without credit to the manner in which the text of the catalogue is compiled and typographically executed. The first is the work of Professor E. Heilbut, who has written a masterly introduction to a series of elaborate and appreciative descriptions of the pictures themselves. The text occupies more than 200 pages, and constitutes a complete and exhaustive description of the collection and of the circumstances under which it was formed; being in this regard a model of what a catalogue should be. It is printed on heavy Holland paper, of folio size, in a type especially cast for it, and the edition is limited to 200 copies, none of which have been placed upon the market.